



MMS Alaska OCS Region

News Release

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MMS Issues Draft EIS for Proposed Cook Inlet Sales and Schedules Public Hearings

The draft environmental impact statement for two proposed federal OCS oil and gas lease sales in Cook Inlet is available for public comment. The Minerals Management Service issued the draft multiple sale EIS on December 6, 2002. MMS will accept comments on the draft EIS until February 11, 2003. The DEIS evaluates proposed Sale 191, scheduled for 2004, and Sale 199 scheduled in 2006. MMS will hold public hearings in Kenai/Soldotna, Homer, Seldovia and Anchorage in mid-January 2003.

MMS prepared a single EIS for both proposed Cook Inlet sales. After completing the Final EIS and the proposed Sale 191 in 2004, MMS will prepare a consistency determination and either an environmental assessment or, if necessary, a supplemental EIS for Sale 199 in 2006. These will focus on any new issues that arise. The public will be asked to comment on each sale proposal.

Public hearings will be held in:

- **Seldovia** on January 21, 2003 at the Seldovia Community Center's Multi-Purpose Room from 7 PM - 9 p.m.
- **Homer** on January 23, 2003 at the Homer City Council Chambers, 491 E. Pioneer Way from 7-9 p.m.
- **Kenai/Soldotna** on January 25, 2003 at the Kenai Merit Inn, 260 South Willow St. from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- **Anchorage** on January 16, 2003 at the MMS Alaska Region Office, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 314 from 4-6:30 p.m.

MMS will hold a teleconferenced hearing on January 28, 2003 from 4-6:30 p.m. to receive additional comments. If you want to testify, call 1-800-764-2627 on January 28 between 4 and 6:30 p.m. MMS employees and a court reporter will hear and record your testimony. Please limit your testimony to five minutes. This is a toll-free number and there is no charge to the caller.

The area proposed for leasing is located in Alaska's Cook Inlet in federal waters between 3 and 30 nautical miles offshore. The area covers about 2.5 million acres extending from just south of Kalgin Island to just northwest of Shuyak Island, in water depths ranging from about 30 to 650 feet. Shelikof Strait is not included in the proposed sale area.

The south-central area of Alaska continues to grow and its demand for natural gas is rising. Cook Inlet has the potential to supply natural gas to the area. Companies are now looking for natural gas onshore. MMS estimates that the offshore potential could exceed one trillion cubic feet of conventionally recoverable natural gas. These reserves can contribute an additional option for a long-term natural gas supply for the south-central region. Exploratory drilling in Cook Inlet also supports the President's National Energy Policy to expand the search for and development of new sources of energy for the nation while protecting the environment.

MMS oversees an extensive environmental, social, and economic studies program that evaluates the impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration and development on the OCS. Currently MMS is sponsoring nine ongoing studies applicable to the Cook Inlet Planning area including preparation of a sea ice atlas, an assessment of seabirds, an update of the oil industry labor factors, continued contribution to the Alaska Marine Mammal Tissues Archival Project, and a publication of a synthesis on the socio-economic effects of the oil and gas industry activity on the Alaska OCS.

Other studies applicable to Cook Inlet include monitoring seabird populations that includes a computerized pelagic seabird atlas for Alaska; investigating the habitat preference of juvenile flatfishes near Kodiak Island; distribution of Cook Inlet beluga whales in winter; current water quality in Cook Inlet, Alaska; sediment quality in Shelikof Strait and Outermost Cook Inlet; and mapping Cook Inlet rip tides.

To request a copy of the draft EIS write to the Minerals Management Service at 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508-4302. The DEIS is also available on CD-ROM, two-volume paper copy, or on the MMS webpage at www.mms.gov/alaska.

Comments may be sent to the MMS Alaska OCS Region, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, AK 99508-4363; submitted via e-mail to AKEIS@mms.gov; hand delivered to the above address, or faxed to MMS at 907-271-6805. Please call MMS at 907-271-6070 or toll-free at 1-800-764-2627 if you have additional questions.

MMS is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. These revenues totaled nearly \$10 billion in 2001 and more than \$120 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and federal park and recreation lands.

Additionally, the State of Alaska receives 27% of all revenues generated as a result of federal leases that lie within 3-to-6 miles offshore the Alaska coast, and 50% of this money goes into the Alaska Permanent Fund Account.

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